THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. IV. January 27, 1939 Shebat 7, 5699 No. 19

Editorials

WHITE RACIALISM IN AMERICA

ADMIT THE REFUGEES

ON MOONEY'S LIBERATION

Religion and Ethics

by BERNARD HELLER

At This Very Hour

THE LESSON OF THE NOVEMBER POGROMS

by PETER HALM

Correspondence

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RELIGION AND ECONOMICS

by Ben Zion Bokser

A significant discussion of the part played by religion in man's efforts to satisfy his economic wants.

●

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE WOODHEAD REPORT

by Jacob S. Golub

A penetrating analysis of inferences to be drawn from the Report with regard to the Arab need for a flourishing Jewish Yishuv.

●

TORAH FROM ZION

by Eugene Kohn

An evaluation of the "religion of labor" as modern Palestine's chief contribution to the Jewish religion of the future.

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200

EDITORIALS

White Racialism in America

A FORM of argument that, in logic, is recognized as a fallacy but, for practical purposes is often very effective, is the retort, *tu quoque* (you also). A party charged with an offense replies, not by denying the charge, but by making a similar charge against the accuser. Such an argument is employed by the Schwartze Korps, organ of the German secret police and Hitler's Elite Guard, in urging the segregation of Jews in "Jim Crow" cars on German railroads, including Jews of American citizenship. "This solution," states the Schwartze Korps, "follows a documented democratic example. For the world's freest country, where even presidents denounce the devilish invention of race consciousness, does not permit its State citizens with equal rights but a darker hue to sit, much less sleep, next to a white person, even if the white is only a sewage worker and the black a world boxing champion or other national hero. The colored people will be relentlessly driven by an equally colored conductor into their own rolling kraal."

The obvious answer to the *tu quoque* argument is that "two wrongs do not make one right." But we are not here concerned with answering the argument. In view of the other measures taken by the Nazis against the Jews, this measure, if put into effect, would be a mere pin prick, but, as Americans, we admit to smarting under this thrust of the Nazis. Their defense is no defense, but their accusation is a valid indictment. Racialism is wrong whether it be an Aryan racialism direct against Jews or a white racialism directed against Negroes. Now that America has assumed the role of champion of democracy and the equal rights of all citizens, it is high time that we put our own house in order and wipe out every last vestige of anti-Negro discrimination, which is a heritage from slavery days.

The recent decision by the Supreme Court demanding the admission of a qualified Negro applicant to the law college of one of our southern states, although that state was willing to pay for his instruction in a Negro college of another state, is a happy indication of a reluctance on the part of our highest tribunal to resort to subterfuges in contravention of the legal rights of the Negro.

Another happy augury is the open advocacy by Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of the President of the United States, of the passage by Congress of an anti-lynching law. True, such a bill would not be directed exclusively against the lynching of Negroes. The evil that it attacks is that of mob-violence in general, whether that violence proceeds from race hatred or

from other motives, but the circumstance which primarily makes such a law necessary is the fact that, unless lynching is made a federal offense, the white-dominated communities of some of our states can easily nullify the legal safeguards of equality contained in the federal constitution by condoning acts of violence against Negroes when conducted by white mobs. They not only can do so, but they have done so time and again.

The Jewish stake in removing the blot of white racialism from American life is clear. Both self-interest and our holiest traditions demand our making common cause with the Negro in his fight for equality of status with the white. We, too, are a minority group and the tendency of dominant majorities to secure for themselves in hard times all the strategic economic positions affects us and the Negro in identical ways. Every totalitarian American movement, like the Ku Klux Klan, is bound to be directed against Negroes, Jews and Catholics. But as religious Jews we appeal to our fellow-Jews on higher grounds than Jewish selfinterest. "Ye shall remember that ye were slaves in the land of Egypt." White racialism is the rationalization with which it is sought to justify the permanent enslavement of the Negro in contravention of those rights which the constitutional amendments adopted after the Civil War guarantee him.

In this purpose all Americans who cherish American democracy and are sincere in their devotion to the declaration of the equal right of all men "to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" will be with us. Europe is a warning to us. If the injustices inflicted upon Jews in Germany will arouse the conscience of America to do justice to the Negro racial minority, it will be some consolation to us Jews. We shall at least have the satisfaction of feeling that we are, to some extent, performing the traditional role of the "servant of the Lord," that our suffering is, in some measure, an expiation for the sins of the world, that "by *our* stripes" others are healed.

Admit The Refugees!

EACH day the plight of the unwanted in Germany grows. The pressure to drive them out is intensified. And each day the possibilities for emigration decrease. One country after another refuses them entrance, while Palestine, the logical haven for the Jewish refugees, is, to all practical purposes, closed as the unruffled British contemplate calling the round table conferences with Jews and with Arabs. In the meantime, there is no lack of sympathy for the victims of fascism from the decent and honorable men and women in the democratic countries. Statement after statement is made, speech after speech is delivered, and a good deal of fine sentiment goes up in carbon dioxide.

These speeches tell us that the Nazis threaten civilization, religion, culture; that the totalitarian states are a cancer in the body politic; that the treatment of minorities by these states turns the clock back to the middle ages; that it is dreadful, terrible. Religion is trodden underfoot; culture is destroyed, and human rights are a dead letter. One is certainly heartened to hear such fine phrases concerning the spirtual, intangible values in life. But when one raises one's voice to suggest that the United States open its doors to admit some hundred thousand refugees, all the lovely words are forgotten and the intangible values forsaken. Then we hear only the crude, bare facts —if they *are* facts—about the impossibility of adding to our population.

Actually, the threat to our economic welfare presented by the arrival of one hundred thousand refugees is ridiculously insignificant. The government is prepared to receive to this land each year at least 150,000 immigrants, if we are to judge by the existing immigration quotas. In reality, no more than 50,000 take advantage of the opportunity to come here, from the various countries of the world. We do not suggest that the quota from Germany be increased at the expense of that of other lands; but we do

insist that the total immigration to America would be 150,000 a year if conditions in other lands warranted emigration from those lands. We cannot therefore maintain that the admission of 100,000 German refugees would do any harm to our economy, any more than the same number of immigrants from other countries would do. The argument is offered that refugees from Germany come without money; but is there any guarantee that the immigrants who came to this country from other places—if they came—would come better equipped? Yet the government *is* prepared to accept them.

Will refugee immigration cause more anti-Semitism? Such is the belief of those who continually forget that at least half the refugees are Christian, that anti-Semitism is always the cloak of reaction, and that anti-Semites would resent any move which helps victims elude the fangs of the barbarians. Nevertheless, care would have to be taken to see to it that the resettlement of refugees goes hand in hand with a program of retraining. Despite the widespread unemployment, word constantly goes out that in certain fields of endeavor there is a shortage of skilled workers. The job of bringing refugees to America is not over when they land at the pier. Thorough studies must be made to divert these people into productive channels.

Here we can learn a lesson from Palestine. Jews who have come to Erez Yisrael have, for the most part, conceived of their transplantation as more than a change in geography; it is for them a change in their whole way of life. As everyone knows, former *Luftmenschen* have turned to productive enterprises. Here too, resettlement work must go on after the refugees have been geographically salvaged.

In any event, we shall be dealing with a fraction of one percent of the wage earners of the country, and in a land which abounds in natural resources and potential wealth, 100,000 new people should not make the slightest upsetting impression. That is, if all our protestations are sincere. If we are really as outraged against the destroyers of civilizations as we pretend to be, ways can be found to accommodate these unfortunate men and women. Certainly, several thousands of children could be absorbed in the homes of the United States without any difficult whatever.

The forces of religion here should raise their voices now, demanding that the administration in Washington give sincere and, if you will, pious thought to the question of opening the doors of our land. Such a move would not only be in the best traditions of the Republic, but would constitute a concrete expression of our abhorrence of all that Germany stands for.

On Mooney's Liberation

WE welcome the liberation of Tom Mooney with mingled emotions. We share in the happiness of all progressive Americans that justice has finally triumphed and that, after an imprisonment of twenty-two years, Mooney is once again a free man. We rejoice, too, that, for all his prolonged incarceration, Mooney has been able to retain touch with the outside world, that his spirit has remained unshaken, and that, as he now emerges into freedom, he is still fired with the ideals that he cherished in his youth and is ready once more to serve the cause of labor and of a new social order. His conduct is a tribute to man's capacity to retain his morale, his self-composure, and his faith in high ideals under the most trying circumstances.

But, frankly, we cannot see in this case, in spite of its "happy" ending, a complete vindication of American justice. Mooney was acknowledged innocent by all who had had any opportunity to study the relevant facts. The presiding justice, the foreman of the jury, and the special government commission agreed that Mooney's conviction was a miscarriage of justice. Crucial witnesses confessed their own perjury. Yet legal technicalities and red tape were in the way of giving the

man another hearing, and it took twenty-two years before a governor was brave enough to perform the elemental justice of releasing a wrongly convicted man from prison. And Mooney's colleague, Warren Billings, is still behind bars!

We feel that there is something wrong with our courts when they can place the formalities of legal procedure above justice to an innocent human being. No man is ultimately safe in the enjoyment of his liberty if, in moments of mass hysteria, unscrupulous politicians and self-seeking "captains of industry" can maneuver into prison, on trumped up charges, the critic of social wrong—the "agitator," the "communist," the "anarchist," the "radical," or the champion of unpopular doctrines by whatever name they choose to designate him.

We favor the suggestion that Mooney be compensated by the state of California for these twenty-two years of which it robbed his life. True, no sum of money can reimburse a man for such an ordeal as Mooney endured. But it would be a useful warning to the state that it must exhibit a greater respect for the rights of its citizens even when they entertain doctrines that are unpopular with its ruling class. And we would make it possible for a man framed by the "officers of the law" to seek redress by bringing charges against those who shared responsibility for the perpetration of any such miscarriage of justice.

Religion and Ethics

By BERNARD HELLER*

THE questions about the relation of religion and ethics which are most frequently propounded are these: What indispensable elements does religion contribute to ethics? Is the belief in God essential to the Good Life? Do desirable and useful precepts and practices need a Divine Author or Supernatural Sponsor to endow them with validity and worth?

These are questions which pressingly come to thinking men and women, and religionists must come to grips with them. They dare not evade them by resorting to a spurious liberalism which avers that ethics and religion may be divorced and that, if one prefers to wed God to the Good Life, it is the result not of a logical or practical necessity, but of a purely subjective predilection. One also must avoid the retort that religion tends to bestow upon moral pursuits a fervor which is absent in non-religious ethical motivations. This is an adumbrated explanation, a half-way answer. For why should zest and fervor be present in a religious and absent in a non-religious ethical philosophy?

In attempting to show that religion has something unique to contribute to ethics, I shall ignore from consideration the hope of reward and the fear of punishment, which have been dominant in early creeds and are still evident in the professions of many contemporary religionists. The most eminent ethical teachers of Judaism have emancipated their philosophies from this tenet.

This was the teaching attributed to Simon the Just by Antigonos of Socho:

> "Be not like servants who minister to their Master upon the condition of receiving a reward, but be like servants who minister to their Master without the condition of receiving a reward."

Ben Azzai said,

> "Run to do a precept no matter how small, but flee from transgression, for precept leads to precept and transgression leads to transgression; *for the reward of a precept is a precept and the reward of transgression is transgression.*"

Rabbi Jacob said,

> "Better is one hour spent in repentance and good works in this world than all of the life of the world to come; yet better is one hour of refreshment of spirit in the world to come than all the life of this world."

* Rabbi, Hillel Foundation, University of Michigan.

They admonished one to pursue the good life *leshem shamaim,* 'for the Name of Heaven' or, as we say, for God's sake.

They did not deny the fact that there were fearful consequences to certain acts which it would be imprudent to ignore. These, however, were not to be deemed metaphysical or moral bases for those acts. One eats a hearty meal after a good day's work or a few hours' of gymnastics. The whetting of the appetite, however, does not constitute the motivation for one's labor or muscular exercise.

The non-religious ethical theories that attempt to account for the moral nature of man and the norms by which the goodness of human deeds may be appraised are deficient because they ignore those aspects of human conduct which negate or do not fit in with their suppositions and postulates. How account, for example, in a hedonist's conception of ethics, for a martyr's unflinching march to the stake in defense of his cherished beliefs or the ascetic's preference for hard and painful disciplines? How account for the innumerable fads and forms and institutions which are devoid of any and all usefulness but to which we cling with an unyielding tenacity? How does utilitarianism explain the universal refusal to convert museums into soup kitchens during the depression or a philatelist's willingness to pay thousands of dollars for cancelled stamps which could not carry a letter even from Ann Arbor to Ypsilanti?

The craving for distinction and fame is also not without a contrary tendency. This is evidenced not only by the appeal which anonymity has for notable personages but also by their sincere or insincere identification of their interests or desires with universal principles and transcendental causes. Hitler and Mussolini easily rouse the masses to support them with a fanatic zeal when they proclaim to them that they act, not to increase their own power or satisfy their craving for fame, but for the glory of ancient Rome and the interests of the new Reich. I shall omit from consideration the millions who seek loss of selfhood by the voluntary merging of their selves with Nirvana, Buddha, and the other all-absorbing gods whom mystics adore.

Secondly, non-religious ethical theories are deficient because they tend, it seems to me, to tether the winged aspirations of an ethical personality to this tiny speck we call earth and insist on terming our highest ideals servants of the fleeting moment, the present, and on stigmatizing our exaltations of the true, the good and the beautiful as creatures of chance impulse or subjective inclination.

The religious explanation of and sanction for ethics do not deny or deprecate the hedonistic urges, utilitarian considerations, and cravings for self-expression that underlie ethical pursuits and practices. Religion, however, asserts that in order to acquire an ethical connotation, such actions and aspirations must be orientated to and integrated with ends whose value and validity transcend the considerations of practicality and usefulness at this moment, in this place, and for only these people.

"We will the right and the good and the just," wrote the eminent thinker, Hugo Munsterberg, "and in this will lies a reference to a goal which in this act itself remains entirely independent of any conscious relation to our own welfare. The meaning of this purposive will is, therefore, not in the least changed when we consider it from another point of view as a process which can be casually connected with our personal pleasure. In this purpose-will connection itself the over-personal relation of the will remains valid. The action may refer to this or that neighbor or to the nation or to the totality of individuals; but in our moral aim we point toward a duty which as such stands above all merely personal interests. It has for us the validity of something which we acknowledge absolutely. The man who really thinks in the spirit of morality knows that this deepest longing

is falsified if it becomes deprived of a relation to something which is independent of merely individual desires. Whoever says duty means a value which is not founded on individual pleasures."

When the religionist insists on identifying the ethical longings of man with God, when he affirms that there is a kinship between the human strivings for Truth, Goodness, and Beauty and the Infinite Being whom he intuitively feels to be real, as real as the material objects which are round about him, though his mind cannot fully comprehend or picture Him, it is not merely to afford us a metaphysical ground or foundation for our ethical ideals, but more to impress us with the universal, eternal character and supreme worth of the moral acts and aspirations of man.

What is the great significance of such affirmation? one may ask. Have we not been taught that man is the measure of all things? Does not that mean that we decide on what is good and when a thing is good, and how long it is to be considered good?

I shall attempt to show that the current upthrust of barbarism and the shameless flouting of all the principles which civilized man cherishes is the product of the notion that our ethics are relative, our morals subjective, and that they are invoked either by economic interests, social needs, or personal will, and that, when their usefulness comes to an end, their value ceases.

Bolshevism, Fascism, and Nazism appropriated the creed of moral nihilism in propounding and developing the philosophy and course of action for their respective devotees. "If ethics are determined by group interests," said the proletarian philosopher, "it is necessary to evolve a new set of morals that will serve particularly our class." Confiscation of possessions, irrespective of whether they were acquired as the result of honest labor, was sanctioned to be right and proper. Courts of law recognized new rules of equity which grew out of what they called 'proletarian justice.' Fascism openly proclaimed adherence to the Machiavellian principle that "Might makes right." Necessity, therefore, justified brutal slaughter of Ethiopians and the theft of their country. Hitlerism also proclaims the validity of German right, which sanctioned the absorption of Austria after spurning the suggestion of a plebiscite but advocated the alliance of the Sudetenland with the Reich through a plebiscite. (This, of course, was before the knightly premier of Great Britain flew to Berchtesgaden and generously proffered to Hitler those portions of Czechoslovakia without even the recourse of a plebescite, in order that the Christian tenet of "Peace on earth and good will toward men" should become prevalent in Europe.)

If right is determined by consequences to a particular group, we need not be amazed if Hitler is incensed at the alleged maltreatment of German minorities outside of Germany, while he and his cohorts resort to the most brutal oppression of a helpless Jewish minority in his own domain. To the exponent of ethical relativism, there is no such thing as consistency of belief or behavior. The situations are different. One treatment relates to members of one nationality and the other to members of another nationality. One is right and the other is not wrong.

Bolshevism, Fascism and Nazism equally aver that Truth has no unconditional claim upon man. Therefore, they do not shrink from modifying and doctoring news and besmirching ideals which their censors or propaganda ministers deem hostile to their respective aims otherwise unpalatable.

The speed with which university men capitulated to Hitler and the ease with which they manipulated their intellectual acumen and resourcefulness in supplying to Hitler's racial antipathies and political ambitions a spurious rationale which they labeled with the term *'Weltanschauung'* is one of the depressing features of the current barbaric upthrust. The following observation by Albert Einstein (Progress Vol. 38, No. 10, November issue), confirmed also by Heinrich Bruening, former

chancelor of Germany (Bulletin of Association of American Colleges, March, 1938) is interesting as well as pertinent:

"Being a lover of freedom, when the revolution came in Germany, I looked to the universities to defend it, knowing that they had always boasted of their devotion to the cause of truth; but no, the universities were silenced. Then I looked to the great editors of the newspapers whose flaming editorials in days gone by had proclaimed their love of freedom; but they, like the universities, were silenced in a few short weeks. Then I looked to the individual writers who, as literary guides of Germany, had written much and often concerning the place of freedom in modern life; but they, too, were mute. Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler's campaign for suppressing truth.

"I never had any special interest in the Church before, but now I feel a great affection and admiration because the Church alone has had the courage and persistence to stand for intellectual truth and moral freedom. I am forced to confess that what I once despised I now praise unreservedly."

Is this difference between the church and the other institutions mentioned due, I wonder, to accident or to differences in the essence of each. The religionist affirms the unconditional sovereignty of truth and justice and goodness because these ethical qualities reflect the very essence and nature of God. "Righteousness and justice, are the foundation of Thy throne; mercy and truth go before Thee, O Lord," is the affirmation of the Psalmist. And since God is universal and changeless, therefore, these virtues and attributes, too, must remain unconditionally and eternally valid for man. "God is good to all and His mercy is extended to all" is the theme of another religious poet. "Almighty King, who sittest upon the throne of mercy and governest the world with loving kindness, whose charity is extended *to all creatures of flesh and spirit,* forgive us our sins for Thou art good and ready to forgive and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee," is the main motif of the Jewish liturgy on the Day of Atonement.

The identification of moral ideals with God is intended also to signify to us the supreme import which religion attaches to the ethical strivings and achievements of man. Man's good or evil deeds, religion says, affect beneficently or adversely the whole cosmos. All of creation as well as the individual's personal destiny may be changed by a man's good or evil deed. Because of the sin of one person, says a rabbi, that individual and the whole universe are deprived of a great deal of good. The Jewish state came to an end, the holy Temple was set aflame because of the inconsiderateness of one man. Each human deed, aye, each word that a man utters, does not, like a bursting bubble, vanish into air, but reverberates to the uttermost ends of the Universe, as well as it impresses itself on the soul of that individual. In the Midrash and in the Hasidic literature, this view is poetically expressed when it is said that every action of a man assumes the form of an angel who accompanies him even when he approaches the celestial throne of the Almighty. If the deed be a good one, that angel is his defender—if evil, it is his accuser.

It is this religious view of the supreme signficance of ethical conduct that made the rabbis assert that man is God's copartner in the work of Creation which, they assert, is unceasing. Man and God are engaged in transforming a morally-indifferent Nature to a Moral Universe, where in due course of time, its very blind forces will become responsive to the noblest aspirations of man. "In days to come, the wolf shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid and a suckling shall play on the hole of an asp, and a weaned child shall put his hand on a basilisk's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy Mountain. For the earth shall be full of the knewledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Such was the vision of Isaiah.

"Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice. Before the Lord: for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth; He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His truth." (Psalm XCVI, 11-13).

This conception that man is a co-partner of God and the notion that the Torah is ever evolving prevented the Moral Law, at least as Judaism conceived it, from becoming a set of meaningless edicts imposed upon Israel by some celestially dwelling Despot. The authoritarianism and rigorism which humanists and naturalists attribute to a religious sanction for ethics is so exaggerated that one is prone to consider it the product of imagination or deliberate distortion. *Torot*—moral laws—the rabbis deem susceptible to change in response to the needs and the imperatives of specific situations. *Torah*—the Moral Law—the irrepressible yearning of man for spiritual and just relationships—that, however, say they, shall never change. The Torah is given to man, they also aver, and should serve him. This, however, does not mean that it should be like putty in his hands—to be fashioned into a form dictated by a whim, caprice, or interest of the moment.

Lastly, the religious conception of morality energizes while the non-religious conception enervates man in his striving for perfection. For without the affirmation of the reality of God—"the Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness"—the outcome of our efforts, herculean as they may seem, must appear like the flapping of wings against iron walls. The sense of insecurity which we have about the fate of our noblest hopes and dreams in a universe which seems cold and irresponsive if not hostile to our most cherished aspirations, is bound to cast us into a slough of despondency. The zest is gone and a feeling of futility overwhelms us. Exhausted and frustrated, we are bound to mutter, "What's the use?"

This, however, is not the case when we affirm the existence of a God,—a Moral God—who solicitously watches, if He does not actually aid, man in his moral ventures. God is then on our side and though the odds may be against us, we cannot fail. "Religion," says Professor DeWitt Parker, "is the promise that all man's values are secure."

If, in the struggle to make real one's ethical idealism, one is called upon to give his all, he will be disposed to offer the sacrifice not in a mood of stoic resignation to a meaningless whim of fate, but rather with an elation born out of the consciousness that his supreme sacrifice is for or in the interest of transcendent values. This feeling will be independent even of his belief in the final triumph of his cherished principles. For even if the masses of mediocre individuals will never get to perceive or esteem their value and import, his loyalty and devotion to them will remain unshaken because he knows their intrinsic worth. This is what is implied in the frequently misquoted utterance of Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

A classic illustration of the strength which religion brings to moral endeavor, which is accompanied with pain and maximum personal sacrifice is revealed in the following incident recorded in the Talmud. The anecdote necessitates a few sentences of introduction.

The Caesars of the second century, like Der Fuehrer and Il Duce, their modern imitators, were determined to exterminate the Jewish state and people. For they saw an irreconcilable opposition between Hebraic ideology and ethics and the Roman ambitions and policies. Instead of resorting to the techniques of political disfranchisement and economic strangulation, the ancient Caesars were bent on the spiritual suffocation of the Judeans. To this end, they closed their schools and academies and forbade them to study the Torah even in the privacy of their homes. The rabbis saw in this edict the death blow to Judaism; without Judaism the very existence of the Jews as a people would be impossible. Many of the rabbis were, theerfore, resolved to defy this edict. One of these martyrs was Hananiah ben

Teradyan. The Talmud relates that Roman officials found Hananiah sitting and occupying himself with the Torah, publicly gathering assemblies, and keeping a scroll of the Law in his bosom. Straightway they took hold of him, wrapped him in the Scroll of the Law, placed bundles of branches round him and set them on fire. they then brought tufts of wool, which they had soaked in water, and placed them over his heart, so that he should not expire quickly. His daughter exclaimed, "Father, that I should see you in this state!" He replied, "If I alone were being burnt it would have been a hard thing to bear; but now that I am burning together with the Scroll of the Law, He will have regard for my plight." His disciples called out, "Rabbi, what seest thou?" He answered them, *"The parchments are being burnt, but the letters are soaring on high."*

William James beautifully described the role of religion in the ethical life of man in the following paragraph. "When we believe that God is there, and that he is one of the claimants, the infinite perspective opens out. The scale of the symphony is incalculably prolonged. The more imperative ideals now begin to speak with an altogether new objectivity and significance, and to utter the penetrating shattering, tragically challenging note of appeal. They ring out like the call of victorious Alpine eagle, *'que parle au precipice et que le gouffre entend'* and the strenuous mood awakens at the sound.

"The capacity of the strenuous mood lies so deep down among our natural human possibilities," he therefore concludes, "that even if there were no metaphysical or traditional grounds for believing in a God, man would postulate one simply as a pretext for living hard, and getting out of the game of existence its keenest possibilities of zest."

Religion is not an opiate, though inner peace and serenity and a sense of harmony with Nature is its effect in the soothing of troubled souls and the calming of ragged nerves. Religion, however, is as it was to the prophets of yore, a stimulant to man's noblest aspirations and highest ethical ventures.

At This Very Hour

The Lesson Of The November Pogroms*

By Peter Halm

What I think of the disaster that has overtaken the German Jews is the stereotyped question people ask me in this country when they have learned of my active participation in Jewish life in Germany, a participation which was but recently terminated by my flight from the terror. The answer I feel constrained to give is not another account of horror and misery. There is hardly any need for such a report in view of the most recent crop of news coming from Germany which must have convinced even the most incurable optimists among American Jewry that the destruction of German-Jewish life is well-night complete. At this juncture, in this hour of dire tragedy, my conscience compels me to utter a word of criticism and to sound a call to action.

Shall I be accused of ingratitude if I raise a warning voice and even go so far as to indulge in criticism, not to say accusation? I hope not. I shall never be oblivious of the great debt of gratitude I owe to my American protectors and benefactors. We German exiles are fully aware of the enormous debt we owe to American Jewry.

* This article was written by a German refugee immediately after the November outrages. We publish it notwithstanding our dissent from some of its statements—its commendation of fanaticism and hate, for example—because it is a challenging article on a pressing problem and we hope that it will evoke thought and discussion. We welcome correspondence on the subject.—Eds.

This acknowledgement notwithstanding, words need be spoken today, words which are more important in the present crisis than mere words of thanks. The events of November 1938 will be remembered in the tragic history of our people along with those of 1492. It must be said that even the unforgettable ghastly massacres of Kishinev involved only 2,000 people and claimed only about 100 lives, whereas, in our time, upward of half a million Jews are concerned in Germany alone, and the victims who have lost their lives at the hands of their persecutors as well as at their own hands, being driven to suicide by despair, number in the thousands. Yet we Jews have learned nothing from our own history. Will the catastrophe of November 1938 open our eyes, at long last?

We German Jews have lost everything —our possessions, our civic rights, our place in society, everything; but there is one thing we have gained, namely, a deeper insight into the ageless history of our people, a better understanding of Jewish destiny. We have re-experienced the eternal Jewish fate. Because of this insight which we have gained at so great a cost, it behooves us, nay it is our sacred duty, to warn our American co-religionists so that they may not fail to profit from the lesson taught by our own disaster.

We who have actively contributed to cultural Jewish life in Germany find it difficult to see eye to eye with American Jews in respect to the present Jewish crisis. We note, not without gratitude, the multitude of entertainments, charitable performances, *tees dansants,* which are sponsored for the purpose of succoring the refugees. We read the host of apologetic pamphlets and paper protests, all of which literary efforts are as effective as were our own back in 1932, being of a similar nature. What we fail to perceive, however, is the endeavour to inaugurate a far-seeing and far-reaching Jewish policy. How timely seem the bitter words spoken by Heine ninety-eight years ago when he chastised the French Jews for their weak-kneed attitude toward the massacres of Damascus; yet it must be conceded that French Jewry was much inferior to present-day American Jewry so far as economic power was concerned, and the pogroms of Damascus were mild in comparison with the stupendous atrocities perpetrated by Hitler Germany. Every word used by Heine fits our own days. "The progress of our people toward a national consciousness and entity has been infinitesimally small. What other confirmation is needed but the testimony of our own experience. We Jews are still given to apologetic dialectics instead of planning, we prefer philanthorpy to determined reconstruction. Philanthropy is all right, but there are times and conditions when alms-giving misses the mark. Must we not concede the truth of Count Le Rochefoucault's remark: 'We all have enough strength to bear the suffering of others.' "

For two thousand years our "people of sufferers and thinkers" has been dwelling by the waters of Babylon, thinking, suffering, wailing, and preoccupied with this thought: "We must not be too conspicuous." What is the result of this age-old policy of modesty and timidity on the part of us, the "salt of the earth?" that our situation is more desperate than that of any other people on the globe. Here, as well as in other countries of the Diaspora, Jewish leaders are content to give *zedakah* while keeping silence about the problems of Jewry. Heine's Rabbi Von Bacharach exclaims rightly: "O Israel, wickedness waits on you outside the gates, and foolishness protects you inside the gates." It was a crushing blow to me when a certain lady, who is highly influential in American Jewish councils, adjured me not to say anything about Jewish misery in one of the daily papers. Must it not appear suspicious that all these accounts are furnished by non-Jews while we ourselves keep still? Every other people that has not resigned itself absolutely to extinction makes its demands and accusations known before the world. The "poor Arabs," as Hitler called them, have appealed clamor-

ously to the Four Powers of Munich, but our leaders implore their loyal followers to keep still lest they become too conspicuous.

The Jews have willingly taken the advice of their arch-enemies, Mussolini and Goebbels, who have urged the Jews to keep quiet about the Jewish problem in fascist countries. This policy of hush has been pursued by our notables for hundreds of years. Would it not be wise to revise it today in the face of the approval given to it by our enemies? It was Ferdinand Lassalle who exclaimed after the massacres of Damascus in 1840:

"Would I could place myself at the head of Jewry and lead them out of oppression into free statehood! Were the oppressions against which the Swiss rebelled any more severe than those inflicted upon us? Cowardly people, you deserve your lot! The worm writhes under the foot, but you bend lower still!"

That a man of so militant a frame of mind as Lassalle renounced his Judaism is not due only to the fact that the Jews, as Max Brod once wrote poetically, "were too weak in their love." The truth is that the Jews have not hated enough, nor have they staked their lives on the cause of their national salvation. The best ones in our midst never thought the cause of Jewry worth fighting for, since the grand rabbis themselves were unwilling to do more than preach and preach without end or success. The very fact of anti-Semitism could prove our power and our still unexisting unity. The boycott of German goods, although it is only a defensive weapon, has shown to the world that we are not entirely helpless. Unfortunately, we Jews are incapable of concerted and effective activity. We take too long a time to reflect before we swing into action. On the day when the Hitler government imposed the $400,000,000 levy on German Jewry the leaders of World Jewry should have come out with an appeal to the Jews outside Germany to match the levy with a contribution in behalf of the refugees. At that moment of world-wide indignation such an appeal might have born fruit, but our bureaucracy is always too slow for immediate action. Nor have prominent Jews acted individually. After the surrender of the English and French governments, only Lord Duff Cooper resigned; the Jewish ministers, Hore-Belisha and Mandel, clung to their jobs; they had to stick to their *koved.* When, for example, have Jewish workmen in New York City, gone out on a solidarity strike for their persecuted brethren in Europe, or where have Jewish employers emerged from their indifference?

For five years World Jewry consoled itself in the thought that the German Jews had at least retained their economic existence. This alibi will not serve any longer. Everything has been taken from them except life itself, and that is hardly safe anymore while every third Jew is in a concentration camp and the most influential newspaper demands a "war with fire and sword."

What new means of self-deception are going to be resorted to? We are so skillful in devising half measures that can satisfy only the proverbial ostrich which buries its head in the sand. In this regard the Jews of Europe are no different from those of the New World. We were equally blind over there. We thought it sufficient to provide a refugee with the fare to the nearest Kehillah. Because we now realize our short-sightedness we want to warn our American co-religionists against a similar make-shift attitude. The November pogroms should have opened the eyes of those stricken with blindness. Because we ourselves have suffered, we wish to protect our brethren in the New World from a similar fate. And we know that paper protests addressed to the Dalai-Lhama or the president of the League of Nations are not going to turn the trick; not even a few smashed windows in a German Consulate (for which the American government would have to apologize to the government of the Reich).

No other people, in relation to its size, has produced so great a number of great creative thinkers as the Jews. Very few of

these thinkers have exerted themselves in behalf of their own people. Spinoza, Mendelsohn-Bartholdy, Liebermann, Freud, Ehrlich and countless others have enriched the world while benefiting Jewry only indirectly. Cannot our people realize that a nation forfeits its right to an independent existence if it wastes all its creative efforts in behalf of the world and ceases to exist as an entity? Herzl alone called into being the one positive movement in modern Jewry, and that is his matchless achievement. His success was tremendous. A young Jewish community of half a million people is building for itself in Palestine a new, healthy, albeit perilous, existence, setting a milestone in Jewish development. If Jewry had taken Herzl's movement more seriously instead of confusing it with the *halukkah* of a past age, the success of Zionism would have been infinitely greater.

Yet it must be admitted that Zionism is in a difficult position today. Its difficulty does not lie only in the political situation, but in a spiritual cul-de-sac into which it has been forced because of the changed world conditions. Being deeply devoted personally to the cause of Zionism, I wish to say that Zionism must no longer consider itself the only answer to the challenge of our times. The doors of Eretz Israel are unfortunately practically closed, and certainly not only for today. If Zionism persists in the assumption that it constitutes the only solution of the Jewish question, then the Zionists are retreating into the desert, becoming a sect, no longer in touch with realities of modern Jewish life. We see a glimmer of hope in American Zionism in whose ranks there prevails a more critical attitude toward the intellectual sterility of the movement, evidenced, for instance by the courageous criticism which Ludwig Lewisohn recently published in "The New Palestine." The Zionists of Germany have come to realize that no means of relief or rescue must be rejected, and we think it sheer insanity to place all our hopes in that tiny and tempestuous corner of the world in the Near East. We salute Palestine as the eternal spiritual home of the Jews and also as a material home to which we want to make our strongest contributions; but we dispute as sincerely the current assumption that our people are too weak to carry out more than one project. Even in the idyllic years prior to the war, such good Zionists as Nordau demanded a *"Nachtasyl"* for our people in Uganda. If the plan had not been checked by the opposition of our "idealistic politicians," our situation would be infinitely better today. It seems unbelievable that even so great a personage as Chaim Weizman, to whom we all look up in veneration, should be opposed to any work of reconstruction outside the Zionist movement. Yet such was the report we received from London in November.

What does the hour demand of us?

First and foremost, we must face the whole problem of Judaism squarely as a historical fact and task. In an ideal world, there would not perhaps be a Jewish question. The longer we endeavor to hush it up, the worse will the problem become and the more painful for us. Ours are still great and untapped resources of power. We must concentrate them on this one paramount task. Unfortunately, we are so refined and intellectual that we cannot become fanatical about anything, not even about our own lot. We must learn to love fanatically and to fight fanatically as well. The enemies of democracy and Judaism have their fanatic and zealous protagonists. Unless we can match their efforts, our total perdition is inevitable. Has any Jewish financier ever made sacrifices for the Jewish cause (I mean outside the giving of alms)? The Barons Hirsch and Rothschild, who turned down Herzl, are still with us, discharging their obligations toward Jewry by attending horse-races and taking part in world cruises. World Jewry is still wealthy. The first step toward improvement will be the end of expenditures for yachts and rare collections. Even today American Jewry is rich enough to make homes for thousands of immigrants. But the difficulty is a wide-

spread ignorance of the basic Jewish problems. It is being overlooked, for example, that the concentration of Jews in large cities and in commercial vocations is a constant source of danger, and committees must do their best to remove refugees from the cities of entrance on the Atlantic seaboard.

When will our uncrowned kings, whose divine right of kingship has been derived from the size of their bank deposits, rise to the occasion and tell the torturers of Central Europe to stop, in a language that they can understand? Do they really believe that their "good conduct," as Goebbels expressed himself, could improve the lot of the unfortunate ones in Germany? Is it not stupid to believe a word these gangsters say? Today there can be not a shadow of a doubt that all those who cannot flee abroad will be shot "while trying to flee" from concentration camps or starve to death in their homes. Even German papers have conceded that the slaying of the legation attache was merely a welcome excuse, that all the measures had been planned in advance. The registry of Jewish possessions, decreed last spring, and the restriction of the use of property should be sufficient evidence. We shall not glorify the memory of poor Hershel Grynszpan, as the Nazis glorify their own murderers. We reject most seriously murder as an instrument of political action—yet we do not settle any blame on the head of poor Hershel. We remember, however, that the bullets of the Nazi slayers hit their marks and got their men: the great Walter Rathenau, Gustave Landauer, Chancellor Dollfuss. We seem to be bunglers always when we attempt the exceptional, and one thinks of the word, *"Shlemiehl."* Ever since 1933 the announcement of the "final solution" of the Jewish question is repeated year after year by the Nazi government. Do not believe them! They will not rest until the last Jew has been killed, the last synagogue burned down, the last Hebrew burial places desecrated.

We Jews must become hard in order to be strong, and we must write off thousands of lives, though our hearts may bleed. We must not grant another Munich to the murderers and we must fight the war which has been declared on us to the end, whether that means their destruction or ours. The solution of the "Jewish question" will prove whether there is anything like a world conscience, for the Jewish question is one for all humanity, indeed. Jewish courage will have to assert itself in more perilous places than the studios of movie concerns and the pulpits of synagogues. Even outside the ranks of Jewry there is now discernible the will to bring about a decision over life and death, and it might be ordained by fate that the Jewish question will separate the spirits of good and evil. For Jewry the year 1938, which spelled the end of one of the most valuable Jewish communities, will certainly be a memorable year. Either we shall join ranks and prepare the way for a come-back, or our disintegration will progress with increasing speed. Today it is still possible that in Evian dozens of Jewish groups present a ludicrous picture before the world, and that we are offered some exotic territories as charitable gifts of the British Empire while no authoritative Jewish representation exists to reply either with a categorical "yes" or "no."

I entertain no illusions about the efficacy of this article. Like thousands of others it will be read, praised, or derided, and forgotten. But like a grandson of Baalshem to whom a pupil remarked flatteringly: "Rabbi, you are talking so prettily," I should like to say: "I would rather be silent than be a pretty speaker." The times are too serious for brilliant journalistic sallies. We want neither praise nor chiding. We want to be taken seriously. It is meritorious under the present circumstances to be a nuisance, if no more than that. We have one hope left; we know that, scattered in all parts of the world, there are at least a few souls to whom the Jewish question means destiny. Like ourselves they are determined to devote to the problem of our

people their comfort, their property, even their lives. Today there are only a few of them, in Paris, in New York, in Prague, in Jerusalem. Perhaps our call will reach them and perhaps it will be the rallying cry for the union of scattered and unutilized forces. Our history as well as that of our enemies proves that mass movements are caused by fanatics. If we are lucky to open up the way to freedom for our people by these lines, there will be an end to all the making of books and preaching and talking. New life will spring from the ruins.

Correspondence

Sirs:

The recent announcement in the House of Commons, to the effect that a "round-table" discussion between Jews and Arabs is finally to be arranged by the British Goverment, makes us, on the one hand, feel "glad all over" that we shall, at last, have an opportunity to meet our Arab brethren across the table. But are we Zionists prepared to deal realistically with the fact that we shall apparently be outnumbered or outweighed at this conference?

This generation has had all the experience that one would need to learn the bitter lesson of un-preparedness, but have we learned it?

Look at 1919. For twenty years now, the favorite topic of discussion among historians has been whether or not certain nations were ready when the World War came. "Was Germany ready?" "Was Russia ready?" "Were France and England ready?" Bulky tomes have been written on the subject, but they have only served to prove one thing conclusively, and that is that they were *all* ready,—*all but the Jews.* Out of the clear blue sky the peace-makers of Paris were forced to create such nations as Czechoslovakia, Poland, Albania, Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Syria, Hedjaz, and Iraq. Frontiers were created and safeguards thrown up around them. Funds were advanced to them. Everything was done to help make of them solid, self-reliant nations.

The Jews, on the other hand, blessed with an abundance of hope and permeated with the inhibitions of an age-long galuth, had no one ready or able to speak with authority as to the plans or demands of the Jewish people. Whenever one of our leaders would step forward and make a given request, another leader would be found willing to take a bit less. Whenever a deal was about to be closed with one group, another group would come forward to challenge the authority of the first. When statehood was offered to us by the Allied leaders, there was no one there prepared to accept it. In short, while the others came with demands, that in most cases exceeded their justifiable expectations, we came, as usual, with nothing but prayers and hopes for a better day.

What was the result? Our long-awaited opportunity of obtaining *universal sanction* for the return of Palestine to the Jewish people, in consonance with the original plans of Herzl, was missed and we have been suffering the consequences ever since. The conclusion of the World War was the one historic moment when *unanimous* approval of the Zionist ideal, including the explicit consent of the Arabs, could have been obtained. Had we then been ready with a well-laid plan of action, the Arabs would have been offered this simple deal: "Gentlemen, we will concede to you the million-and-a-half square miles on the so-called Arab Peninsula, if you will definitely concede to the Jewish people the comparatively insignificant thirty or forty thousand square miles in Palestine." The Arabs would have been happy to close this sort of a deal then and there.

What is the situation now, in view of everything that has transpired in recent years? Are the Jews, whose title to Palestine is recorded in that Holy Bible that they all swear by, to be the ones and the only ones who shall have both their rights and their needs disregarded? And since all the other national states created after the World War received their enormous territories as a result of the same Peace Treaty that allocated Palestine to the Jewish people and under the authority of the same League of Nations, are they going to be permitted to disregard those clauses of the Peace that favor us while holding on to the ones that are favorable to them?

The first question on the agenda of this Round-Table Conference, therefore, is this: Do the Arab nations recognize the validity of the treaty that gave them birth? If their answer is in the negative, then their title to the lands that they occupy is imperfect and the subject under discussion should be, not the ownership of Palestine alone, but that of all the lands situated between Alexandretta and the Persian Gulf. The alternative is, of course, a frank and formal recognition on the part of everyone at the table, of the Balfour Declaration and of the Mandate. The Arabs must be informed very plainly that their Charters are no better than the one given to us. Invalidate one and you have invalidated the others. And unless we, on our part, are prepared to fight it out along this line, come what may, we have no business going to the Conference at all.

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